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ABSTRACT

This publication aims to help infant/toddler caregivers and directors of infant/toddler programs by outlining the goals and skills needed to work with children during their first three years. The work is divided into two complementary sections, one for directors and one for caregivers. Section I defines the roles of directors of infant and toddler programs and infant care coordinators in terms of program philosophy and goals, professional leadership and staff supervision, daily program implementation, and management decisions. Section II, which focuses on caregivers, describes day-to-day tasks according to the following major goal areas: (1) a safe and healthy learning environment; (2) development of children's competence; (3) establishment of positive child, family, and provider relationships; (4) effective program management; and (5) promotion of professional growth and development. In both sections, the statements of general purpose are defined in terms of more specific core areas of high quality care. (RH)

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Visions

for

Infant/Toddler

Care

Guidelines for Professional Caregiving

PS 018176

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The Program for infant toddler caregivers

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Sacramento, 1988

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Visions for Infant/Toddler Care

Guidelines for Professional Caregiving

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for the
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PREFACE

At a time when half the mothers in this country are gainfully employed, most of them full time, more young children require care outside the home than ever before. The purpose of this document is to help those responsible for the challenging job of providing such care, whether in centers or family care homes, by outlining the goals and defining the skills needed to work with children as they grow and develop during their first three years.

These visions for quality care fall into two complementary sections, one for directors and one for caregivers. Section I defines the role of directors of infant and toddler programs and infant care coordinators in terms of program philosophy and goals, professional leadership and staff supervision, daily program implementation, and management decisions. Section II focuses on caregivers and describes day-to-day tasks according to five major goal areas ranging from providing a safe and healthy learning environment to establishing positive and productive relationships with families.

In both sections these visions or statements of general purpose are further defined in terms of more specific core areas of quality care. They are not intended to impose formal routines on centers or family care homes but rather to support the unique value of flexible home and center environments and the diversity of individual providers. These goals and the related skills directors and caregivers need to think about in managing a well-run program and meeting the needs of infants and toddlers apply equally well to both centers and family care homes. Their purpose is to serve as guideposts in setting up a safe caregiving environment, planning sound activities, solving day-to-day problems, and enhancing professional growth.

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This publication is based on the Child Development Associate (CDA) Competency Standards for Infant/Toddler Caregivers and Family Day Caregivers. However, it differs from the CDA document in that it (1) does not deal with assessment of competency; (2) integrates the behaviors of family and center-based care; and (3) contains a special section for directors of infant centers.

This publication was developed by the Center for Child and Family Studies, Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, under the direction of J. Ronald Lally. The developers are indebted to members of the Ad Hoc Committee on Infant Day Care of the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs, who aided the writing effort by reacting to early drafts of the CDA competencies and making recommendations.

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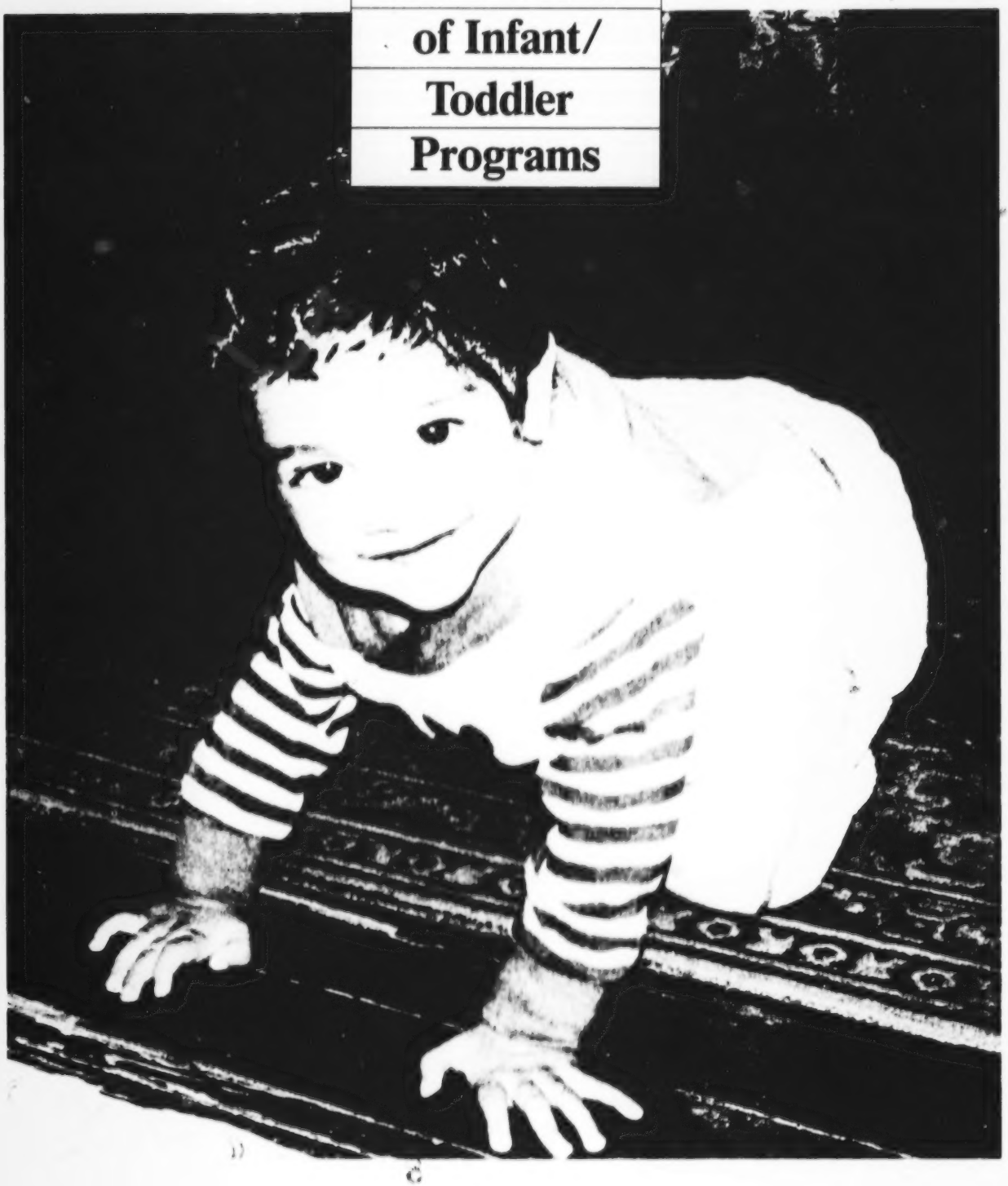
SECTION I

Visions for Directors of Infant/ Toddler Programs



Introduction

Although directors of infant and toddler programs may not work directly with children and parents, they do play a crucial role in providing leadership, stability, guidance, and moral support for caregivers, children, and parents. Their leadership in defining a program philosophy grounded in knowledge about the unique needs of infants and toddlers can give caregivers and parents a sense of shared purpose and provide guidance for daily tasks and decisions. Their management and organizational skills can ensure that the center runs smoothly and that infants and toddlers thrive on their relationships with loving, attentive caregivers. A director's ability to share enthusiasm and support for staff as individuals and as a team can offset the potential for staff burnout and frequent turnover. Through their work in evaluating all aspects of the program, directors can provide a basis for thoughtful change and careful planning to ensure the best experience for each infant and toddler in the program.

The following pages offer a broad outline of visions or goals that all directors should be thinking about and reaching toward in their work to ensure the best possible care for infants and toddlers, to promote good staff morale, and to involve parents as partners in the process. As the scope of these goals suggests, a director's work is tremendously challenging and demanding. Indeed, the sheer number of tasks described may seem overwhelming; but it is important to bear in mind that the tasks can be accomplished in a variety of ways according to the diverse styles, experiences, and skills individual directors

bring to the job. All have different strengths and can build on these while continuing to learn. An effective director of an infant and toddler center will delegate many responsibilities to others: staff, parents, board members, and consultants. The trust and support they share with each other will increase the quality of their work with infants and toddlers.

The term *director* is used in this publication to describe the person who has administrative responsibility for an infant and toddler program. In some large agencies an agency director may be responsible for more than one site, work from a central office, and travel to each site regularly to observe staff, provide good supervision and training, and monitor the ongoing program. A center director may be responsible for a center that includes infants, toddlers, and older preschool children. An infant/toddler coordinator may have specific responsibility for the youngest children and may share with the program director many of the tasks outlined in the goals. A family care coordinator of several family care homes can apply the skills and knowledge of a center director to working with family care providers. In a very small center, a head teacher or teacher/director may be the person in charge. All of these individuals—the agency director, the center director, the infant/toddler coordinator, the family care coordinator, and the head teacher or teacher/director—can use the goals presented in this publication to examine their work and identify areas where they may need to improve or need consultants or other staff to accomplish the work.

The following goals for program directors outline ways to define, implement, and facilitate quality care for infants and toddlers. The director may spend some days far from the children while he or she, for example, works on the budget, calls a plumber, schedules meetings, or recruits substitutes. All of those tasks are essential to the work of caregivers, the confidence of parents, and the experience of each child.

VISION I

Program Development and Maintenance

Program Philosophy and Goals

The director works with board members, staff, and parents to develop a program, a philosophy, and a set of goals based on knowledge of infant and toddler development, group care, and the needs of the community.

Parents and their infants and toddlers quickly become aware of the values, priorities, and assumptions of staff members. A caregiver may signal the importance of one child over another or assume that a child is familiar with a cultural practice which the child has never experienced. Two caregivers might unwittingly respond to the same child's developmental need (e.g., testing limits and saying no) in ways too different to be helpful. Therefore, it is essential that a director work with staff on every aspect of the program's philosophy and goals to (1) build the same base of knowledge for all staff to use in the daily program; (2) help staff members examine their behavior and become aware of their less conscious attitudes and feelings; and, perhaps most important, (3) help staff members behave as consistently as possible with the children and parents so that similar expectations and continuity of care can be developed from one caregiver to another. Frequently, only continuity of care for a child over a period of time is emphasized. It is just as important to consider continuity between one caregiver and another.

The director should involve the staff in defining what the program seeks to accomplish with infants and toddlers, parents, and community and should be aware that their understanding and sense of ownership are essential in putting the philosophy into action. The goals should ensure a comprehensive focus on the child's whole development (e.g., using feeding times to promote social and emotional growth, meet health and nutritional needs, and strengthen the primary attachment between infants and parents). A clear statement of program philosophy, translated into a complete set of caregiving goals like those outlined in Section II, can provide the shared sense of purpose, program cohesiveness, and even common language that help sustain commitment and guide daily practice. This written statement of philosophy and goals should be distributed to all board members, staff, and parents.

Policies and Procedures

The director develops clear policies and procedures for daily operations, in cooperation with board members, staff, and parents, to ensure fairness and consistency for all program participants.

A key means of translating program philosophy and goals into day-to-day operation is through a standard set of policies and procedures. Developing such policies and procedures helps in two major ways. First, it gives everyone the sense of being part of an institution in which fairness and equity are important. For example, if one parent is not reminded about being prompt while another parent is made very uncomfortable about tardiness or if one staff member is allowed many unexplained absences while another is not, the morale of everyone in the program will suffer. Second, a clearly written statement of policies and procedures, distributed to staff, parents, and others involved in the program, provides a framework for ongoing program monitoring and evaluation. This statement should address all core aspects of the program:

- *Administration:* board's function and selection of members, appointment and functions of the director, chain of command, administrative committees
- *Personnel:* hiring procedures, job descriptions, salary schedule, benefits, absences and leave, personal and professional activities, evaluation, staff development, in-service training, resignation and termination, grievance procedures
- *Children:* program services, assessment and reporting of children's development, reporting of accidents or suspected child abuse, special activities
- *Enrollment:* admission, attendance, hours, fees, illness, holidays, refunds
- *Business:* fee collection, sources of funding, budget preparation and adoption, system of accounting and auditing
- *Parents:* expectations or requirements for parent involvement and education, procedures for admission, schedule changes, conferences with parents, suggestions, complaints

When such policies and procedures are set, it is fairly easy to monitor whether they are being followed, how well they contribute to good child care, and when they need to be revised.

Knowledge and Experience

The director demonstrates knowledge about and experience in dealing with the standards for infant/toddler caregivers, child development theory and research, quality program practice, parenting, staff supervision and training, business administration, and community needs and resources.

Directing an infant and toddler program requires a broad base of knowledge and experience and the ability to share with staff in ways that stimulate and support quality caregiving. This responsibility requires a sound grasp of the changing developmental needs of infants and toddlers and of effective child-care practices to meet them. The director must have a thorough understanding of the special qualities, skills, and knowledge that caregivers need in performing their challenging role. In addition to being an effective business administrator, the director must become familiar with the local community's needs, resources, and ethnic and cultural characteristics. Such a scope of knowledge may seem formidable for one person. However, while recognizing the importance of all areas, the director can supplement and increase his or her knowledge with advice and assistance from others, especially parents, and take advantage of opportunities to learn through reading, attending conferences, and sharing ideas with other professionals. The knowledge and experience the director brings to the job, combined with humility and eagerness to learn, are very important to the staff as well as to the parents and the board.

Advocacy

The director acts as an advocate for the needs of the children, their families, and caregivers.

The day-to-day demands of the program's infants, staff, and parents can completely absorb a director's time and energy. Yet the broader issues affecting quality child care are also important. Directors have many opportunities to influence the thinking and actions of a funding agency, community service organizations, or legislators for the benefit of infants and toddlers. Advocacy may be a role that is new for some directors. It may take time to build one's sense of confidence about whom to talk to, what to say, and how to say it. It will be rewarding to see the positive results. For example, a director might advocate for a fenced play yard on church grounds. Or center directors throughout the area might advocate for increased payments for subsidized child care. More broadly, directors can form cooperative working relationships with all those who affect the program, such as landlords and members of church boards, funding agencies, or community service organizations, and

seek to educate such individuals or groups about the unique and essential needs of infants and toddlers. Parents and staff also should be informed about issues that require their support and should be encouraged to become strong advocates themselves. The director should become knowledgeable about public policy and legislation affecting care for infants and toddlers, learn about child advocacy groups and support their work as much as possible, and through these means promote recognition, respect, and improved salary levels for caregivers.

Community Relations

The director promotes the program as one of several community services through which information and resources can be shared and mutual assistance can be given to serve infants and toddlers and their families.

Making the child care program visible and active in the life of the community has two major advantages. First, parents and their children sense that the program is part of their extended family and that they are rooted in the community. Second, coordination between the program and other community services agencies is enhanced. To achieve this objective, the director should (1) inform the community about the program by writing articles, giving interviews, or speaking to groups; (2) provide staff and families with information about community resources; (3) network with those who can provide services for the program, for individual infants and toddlers, and for their families; (4) provide consultant services to other programs and participate in local professional organizations; and (5) offer the use of program facilities for community meetings or other services when appropriate.

Fund-raising

The director provides leadership in maintaining adequate funding for the program, finding new funding sources, and raising funds to maintain and improve the program.

Fund-raising is a particular kind of program advocacy which the director is in a unique position to provide. He or she can see the big picture and articulate the goals, immediate problems, and financial needs of the program. With firsthand experience and detailed information, the director should remain alert to funding sources that may be available through community agencies, grants, fees, fund-raising events, and donations. Yet the director cannot do the fund-raising alone. He or she can share enthusiasm and a sense of urgency with board members, staff, and parents and support them in fund-raising projects.

The Board

The director works cooperatively with the board to develop philosophy, goals, and policies and keeps the board informed of all program operations and issues.

The relationship between a board and the director will vary from program to program. The director will need to work with the president of the board to clarify that relationship and the role of the board. The director should assist the board in assuming responsibility for developing program philosophy, goals, and policies while keeping the board from getting involved in day-to-day questions of administration. This task is never easy. Boards should deal with larger issues and should become involved in smaller issues only when the members conclude that the latter are being mismanaged. Developing and maintaining a close working relationship with the board president/chairperson is the most important way to delineate these role

differences and to develop a spirit of teamwork between board and staff. In addition, the director should keep the board informed and report both accomplishments and current or potential problems while providing the board with thoughtful and efficient service (e.g., advance notices of meetings, agendas, accurate and timely minutes, prompt response to telephone calls, and the like). In smaller agencies the board's role will also include supervision and evaluation of the director's performance.

Professional Commitment

The director demonstrates a commitment to the program and all participants and supports their motivation to provide quality care for infants and toddlers.

A director may spend the morning giving a warm personal greeting to parents, children, and staff. Later, the director might change the day's appointments in order to meet with a staff team having a difficult week. In the evening the director might respond to an emergency call, chair a meeting, or host a social event. Those are examples of professional commitment, which may be the most important attribute of any director. That commitment is essential to the morale, team spirit, and dedication of the entire staff and offers the most effective way of convincing the program parents that the well-being of their children is the program's strongest concern. Thus, an effective director works to build a sense of community among staff, children, parents, and board members; recognizes the pleasures and difficulties in working with infants and toddlers; helps staff members feel useful, challenged, and recognized; demonstrates concern for the program as a whole by performing responsibilities efficiently and carefully and encouraging others to work to the best of their abilities; responds to complaints or concerns by listening, acknowledging the potential problem, and making plans to gather more information, resolve conflicts, or make changes as appropriate; and models and facilitates working out interpersonal problems directly and fairly.

VISION II

Parents and Families

The director works to strengthen the family, support the attachment of infants and parents, and help parents and staff to work together.

This goal is crucially important for families with children of any age because the family is the ultimate source of each child's healthy development. Strengthening the families of infants and toddlers is even more important, as patterns for a lifetime are beginning to be set. Infants and toddlers need to learn, explore, begin to be aware of themselves, and fall in love with the world—all through developing strong attachments with important adults. No program, however competent, can replace parents as the most important adults in a child's life. Instead, staff must seek to support that parental role. At the same time, parents of infants may feel particularly anxious or guilty about leaving their children. Some may project this anxiety into jealousy or anger at program personnel, causing tension which will be felt by the child as well.

Thus, the director should work with staff in creating a climate of open communication and mutual respect. He or she can accomplish this goal by being responsive to parents' concerns and ensuring that staff members talk frequently with the parents about their child's development through daily conversations, conferences, phone calls, written observations, and assessments. The director should encourage parents to become involved in the program by visiting whenever possible, participating in policy development, providing feedback on the program regularly, and contributing their services (e.g., cooking, carpentry, bookkeeping, or translating) to the program. The director can help educate parents about child development and parenting by surveying parents' interests, setting up meetings on topics of interest, and providing a library of books and articles. The director needs to be particularly involved in those few cases in which there is reason to believe that the family is not supporting the child's development. Developing a strong, supportive relationship with the child's family is every bit as important as developing a close relationship with the infant or toddler.

VISION III

Program Implementation

Planning

The director works with staff to plan the daily program for infants and toddlers and their families.

Ambitious goals, profound knowledge, and deep commitment can all fail if a program's implementation has not been well thought out through careful staff work. Without solid planning the program will have no way to achieve its potential. Staff members need to think ahead about their days with the children and plan together so that they know, for example, who will replenish diapers when they run out and who will care for the group while one caregiver spends time with a mother and father and infant who are new to the program. The director can facilitate this planning by meeting regularly with staff and team members and helping them to schedule routines that support continuity for infants and toddlers in their relationships, activities, and surroundings and to use routines to create learning opportunities and to provide appropriate choices. The director can remind staff of areas that may be neglected and thereby ensure that the daily program of activities builds on the relationship between the caregiver and the child and contributes to the development of the whole child. The director should promote cooperative planning and encourage staff members to coordinate responsibilities with each other.

Communication

The director communicates effectively with parents, staff, and other participants so that each one knows and understands his or her responsibilities and roles and so that the learning environment for infants and toddlers is characterized by cooperation, trust, and understanding.

Good communication is essential to staff morale and program continuity. For example, if a specialist arrives on Tuesday morning to assist with the completion of developmental profiles, an uninformed caregiver will be resentful about the disruption of naps and feeding schedules and will not be able to help the specialist or the children. Moreover, only through clear and consistent communication can children themselves learn to participate in the process of confirming rules and expectations. The director can help keep communication open and clear by developing and using several channels for honest exchange of information, ideas, and feelings. He or she should meet regularly with classroom teams, all staff, head teachers, and individual teachers and communicate through informal conversations and notes. The director can also model active listening skills and methods of resolving conflicts and encourage staff and parents to share information and concerns frequently.

Decision Making

The director makes decisions based on the philosophy and goals of the program and knowledge of infants and toddlers and the community.

The program's participants count on the director to make many decisions each day—from when to close early because the furnace is not working, for example, to whether one staff member would work better with a different team or a younger group of children. Decisions sometimes need to be made quickly and communicated immediately to parents and staff. At other times the director can move more gradually toward a decision and involve individuals or all staff and parents in weighing the potential advantages and disadvantages. An effective director will need to evaluate and decide how to make decisions in a way that is efficient but also satisfying and growth-producing for all members of the program. In doing so, the director should demonstrate consistency so that decisions are grounded in program philosophy and goals and based on the needs of infants and toddlers. Decisions should be made on time through clear lines of authority and should be implemented fully to facilitate the work with infants and toddlers.

Time Management

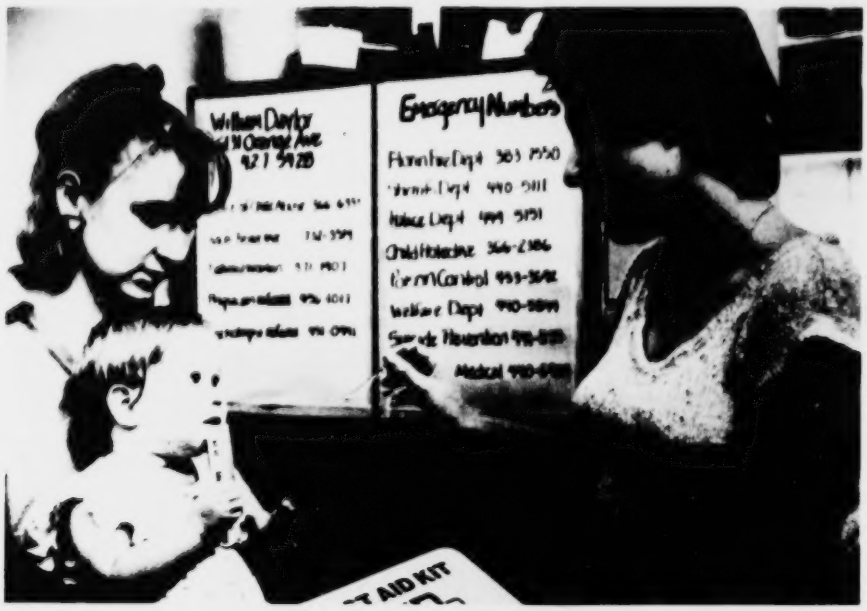
The director uses time management techniques to perform a complex and demanding job in an effective and satisfying way.

The director of an infant and toddler program rarely has a clear desk or an open schedule because of constant important and competing demands. One of the most difficult but important skills of any director is the ability to set priorities—to keep from ignoring major issues in the rush to solve smaller, more pressing problems. To do so, the director must set goals and break them into manageable subgoals, develop realistic time lines for completing specific activities, and delegate some responsibilities to staff in order to devote time to high-priority concerns. Some directors may need outside consulting in this area. Staff morale is highly dependent on the perception that problems are being addressed in a timely manner. The director's job satisfaction will also improve if tasks are accomplished in an orderly way.

Safety, Health, and Nutrition

The director of the infant and toddler program plans and maintains a learning environment that is safe and healthy and includes attention to appropriate nutrition and nutrition education practices in cooperation with other staff.

The arrangement and maintenance of space and materials can make a big difference in feelings and activities. Infants and toddlers need small, cozy spaces as well as room in which to move freely, explore, and learn. The light, colors, and room divisions should also be welcoming and pleasing for parents and caregivers. It is obvious that caring for infants and toddlers in groups presents special health, sanitation, and safety challenges to directors and staff. Directors can help staff realize that children need to feel that their health and safety matter to their caregivers. The messages communicated by such means as washing a child's hands roughly, making negative comments or gestures to a child during messy self-feeding, or leaving a baby in wet clothes can make young children feel insecure and uncomfortable. The director should ensure that staff is well trained in hygiene, safety, nutrition, and health-care practices for infants and that outdoor space is adequate, free of hazardous materials, and well maintained.



Fiscal Management

The director manages the program budget and finances carefully and responsibly to maintain the stability of the program.

The training of program directors is, of course, much more likely to have been in child development or possibly social work, certainly not in business management. Yet an active program of any size requires many business skills. In-service training in business management for directors of nonprofit organizations, as well as the services of a fiscal consultant, may be essential to the smooth operation of the program. The director should develop an annual budget projecting expenses and revenues, including numbers of children and hours served, staff, housing, and equipment; anticipate potential problems in cash flow or expenditures; ensure dependable and adequate sources of revenue through fees, public funds, grants, and fund-raising; and keep staff and parents informed about the program budget, priorities, revenue sources, and expenses. One added reason for developing skills in fiscal management relates to the board. A number of board members may have much more expertise than the director has in financial matters and may be tempted to become excessively involved in staff activities. It is essential that the director set the concerns of board members to rest and at the same time utilize their financial skills in fund-raising and long-range planning.

Recordkeeping

The director maintains complete and accessible records on all aspects of the program.

Good recordkeeping is essential for the effective operation of the program. Accurate information is needed when a question comes up about a parent's fee payments or when staff members become concerned about the history of a child's development. Maintaining complete, up-to-date records is a necessary part of keeping a program running smoothly while sustaining good staff morale and the confidence of board members and parents. Good recordkeeping is also needed to provide complete information to current and potential funding sources as to the manner in which services are provided and funds are spent. Records to be maintained include children's records such as applications, developmental reports, health information, and observations; program records covering equipment, accident reports, menus, and attendance; all financial transactions; and staff records such as resumes, job descriptions, evaluations, attendance at in-service training sessions, transcripts, and health records. Finally, efficient recordkeeping also includes periodic assessment to determine what may be missing or what has been overcollected.

VISION IV

Staff

Recruitment and Hiring

The director prepares complete job descriptions, recruits and hires staff, and provides thorough job orientation to attract staff members who are well qualified and will contribute to the program.

The time and care a director takes to hire and orient qualified staff will be very important to the children and the program. Since infant and toddler care is not just babysitting or a scaled-down version of preschool, the director must identify the special qualities and skills required in persons who care for children in this age group. The director will need to look for innate qualities, such as respect for infants and toddlers, patience, warmth, and sensitivity. In addition, the director will need to identify skill areas, such as observation or notetaking, that can be enhanced through on-the-job training. Directors should also look for the ability and commitment to relate well to other adults, staff, and parents.

Staff Supervision

The director supports staff in meeting the goals and standards for caregivers and provides supervision to facilitate the work of each staff person and minimize the stress of working with young children.

Directors are both the inspiration and the first line of support for their staff as they work out the best possible experience for the infants and toddlers in their charge. It is essential that directors let caregivers know clearly and often that they have the most important job of all because they are given responsibility over the minds and bodies of these new human beings each day. Directors can also provide program guidance and organizational support to help caregivers carry out their tasks. Sometimes a director may join staff, give a helping hand at feeding times, or hold a fretful baby while a caregiver takes a break. Directors need to get to know staff persons as individuals, observe and care for them, and make caregiver assignments that build complementary, stable team relationships. The director can also be a wise counselor, provide staff members with frequent feedback about their work with children and families, and share information from child development theory and research and from experience that may support their work or suggest change. Directors should involve staff in making meaningful decisions about the program, encourage initiative and suggestions, and nurture a sense of professional commitment.

Staff Relations

The director supports staff members in building cooperative team relationships with each other and a positive environment for infants and toddlers.

The director sets the tone of the program—that is, determines the degree to which staff members take the work seriously and the degree to which there is a spirit of teamwork. A positive tone is built through regular observation of staff, evaluation of teams, staff meetings, openness to concerns and grievances, and organizational backup. The use of established guidelines for the resolution of staff grievances and differences is critical to the development of positive relations. These guidelines should specify which problems can be handled by the parties themselves, which problems should be brought to the attention of the director or the board or both, and which procedures should be followed for final resolution. Staff perceptions and understanding (or misunderstanding) of the problems are also important, and it may be necessary to share the results of conflict resolution so that all staff members have a clear understanding of what happened and why.

BRARY

Staff Development

The director supports growth and change for all staff members through regular evaluations and opportunities for training and increased responsibilities.

Staff development through evaluation and training is essential to the healthy life of an infant/toddler program. It is one of the major lines of defense against the persistent problem of staff burnout. Evaluations, used positively and sensitively, can transmit a message about the importance of the caregiver as an individual. The director, other supervisors, and trainers can help caregivers think about their work in new ways and guard against boredom or rigid routines and schedules for infants and toddlers. Caregivers can learn about new possibilities for arranging space, working with parents, planning activities, or using equipment. New insights and challenges can renew the staff's energy and guard against excessive turnover. The stability of satisfied staff members will provide the consistent care that is essential for infants and toddlers.

The director can create a climate of trust and support for the evaluation process. By involving staff members, the director can transform the process into an opportunity for professional development. Evaluations should create developmental plans that are highly individualized and that outline suggestions for improvement or change aimed at the employee's growth on the job. While encouraging staff to work toward degrees and professional credentials, the director can also arrange staff development activities based on the staff's needs and interests. Individuals with expertise in infant and toddler development, parenting, and specific issues of concern or interest should be invited to join staff members for discussions or conferences on individual children and to make presentations at in-service training sessions.

VISION V

Evaluation

The director develops and implements an evaluation process for the program, staff, and children and integrates the evaluations into the ongoing work for the benefit of infants and toddlers and their families.

An ongoing effort to set broad goals, translate them into manageable, measurable objectives, and evaluate performance in relation to the goals will allow the director and staff to see where they are succeeding in their work and where they need to improve. A director can lead staff or consultants in the evaluation process and ensure that all aspects of the program are considered, including the role of the director and the relationship of staff with infants and toddlers and their families. Staff motivation can be improved if the staff members are involved in setting objectives to be measured, receiving feedback, and thinking through the changes that may be suggested in the evaluation.

SECTION II

Visions for Infant/ Toddler Caregivers

Introduction

Infant/toddler caregivers in centers and family care homes work with parents in a partnership to provide quality care and nurturance. They comfort with a song a baby whose mother is on her way to work and rock a fretful teething child while watching other children or sharing in their play. They encourage an infant to explore the world through seeing, listening, vocalizing, and touching. They provide a secure emotional base from which a toddler can find healthy expression for growing feelings of independence. And they give sensitive and constructive support to parents' concerns about a child's sleeping patterns, emotional outbursts, or eating habits. By attending to these and countless other daily needs, caregivers perform an invaluable service.

Although caregiving can be wonderfully rewarding, it is also extremely demanding and would tax the stamina and skill of persons in jobs with the highest pay and prestige. Unfortunately, status and pay for infant/toddler caregivers are distressingly low and often undermine morale and contribute to the common problems of burnout and high turnover. Caregivers, directors, trainers, administrators, parents, and legislators need to work to improve the status and pay in the child-care field while reaching for the best in quality caregiving.

Section II offers visions of what the best consists of in the form of goals that map out the full range of tasks and responsibilities that good caregivers carry out. The goals are not, however, offered as yardsticks for evaluating performance or as a set of rules to regulate practice in different care settings. Their purpose is rather to give practical guidance and professional encouragement to caregivers by setting forth the ideals that they should be striving for in infant and toddler care. Indeed, following these guidelines will make a difficult job more rewarding.

Goals can help in other ways. The relatively low status of infant/toddler caregivers is rooted in timeworn notions about care of infants at home and baby-sitting. The public at large has been slow to realize just how large a fund of knowledge and how much professional skill, difficult decision making, and commitment go into quality care and how necessary such care is to an infant. Caregivers who are reaching toward the goals outlined in this section can only increase the public's awareness and foster in themselves and other caregivers a personal sense of professional renewal and continuing growth.

Before these goals are introduced, an overview will be given of the nature of infant and toddler care, the unique needs of this age group, and the personal qualities necessary to meet those needs.

The World of Infants and Toddlers

The care for infants and toddlers must be regarded as a distinct kind of service—not as a scaled-down version of preschool or as just baby-sitting. The unique characteristics of infancy make this care different from the care of older children because:

- Physical growth and developmental changes are far more rapid between birth and three years than during any other period in life.
- The younger child is more dependent on the caregiver—more vulnerable, less able to cope actively with discomfort or stress from without or within.
- Physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development are more interrelated for this age group than for older children and more dependent on a consistent, loving relationship with an adult caregiver.

This rapid early development is best understood in three different stages: young infants (birth to nine months); mobile infants (six to eighteen months); and toddlers (sixteen to thirty-six months). The age ranges, of course, overlap because children develop at different rates; but these three levels serve to emphasize how a young child's special needs and concerns are shaped by a particular stage of development. For example, competent care of the highly dependent young infant still establishing patterns of sleeping and eating will obviously differ from care of the increasingly independent toddler who shows growing sophistication through the use of symbols, language, and fantasy. Thus the kinds of environments, experiences, and interactions that a caregiver provides a child will have different emphases and aims according to different ages:

- A primary concern in working with ***young infants*** is to nurture feelings of security and trust through consistently warm, supportive, personal contact with each child.
- For ***mobile infants,*** the caregiver acts as a safe, readily available home base from which the infants can explore and experiment—a place to return to be picked up or hugged and given assurance and support.
- For ***toddlers,*** who are experiencing greater awareness of separateness and independence, caregivers can focus on activities that build feelings of initiative, creativity, and individuality while at the same time helping the toddlers learn to interact cooperatively as members of a group.

Personal Qualities Needed in Infant/Toddler Caregivers

The rapid growth and development of infants and toddlers make caring for children during their first three years of life especially challenging. Caregivers need to be particularly flexible in their actions and able to adapt promptly to the changing needs of individual children and the group. While performing the routine tasks of basic physical care such as feeding and cleaning, the thoughtful caregiver also attends to the changing needs of each child: responding to first sounds and words, celebrating mastery of walking or learning to share, and providing opportunities to explore the world. Caregiving also means

forming a strong, caring relationship with each child while at the same time supporting family bonds. Such work is physically, emotionally, and intellectually demanding, calling for some special personal qualities. For example, the successful caregiver for infants and toddlers:

- Enjoys infants and toddlers and finds satisfaction in working with them and in providing quality care.
- Is patient and warm toward infants and toddlers and works to build a personal relationship with each one. Infants and toddlers thrive on the continuity of affectionate care. They need to develop trust and loving attachments as they go back and forth from parents to caregivers.
- Is in good physical and mental health. Energy and resourcefulness are needed to work well with infants and toddlers.
- Understands her or his own attitudes and feelings about caregiving. Some of the normal developmental characteristics of infants and toddlers (e.g.,

crying, messiness, dependency, willfulness, emergence of aggressive behavior, and curiosity about genital differences) often make adults uncomfortable. Being aware of the personal feelings created by working with infants and toddlers is the first step toward dealing with the children constructively.

- Appreciates cultures, customs, languages, and child-rearing practices different from her or his own.
- Is self-confident and comfortable enough to be flexible and adjust to rapid changes in a child's feelings and behavior, to the differing needs of the group, or to the concerns of a tired parent at the end of the day.
- Is challenged and excited by knowledge about infants and toddlers gained from observation, experience, research, theories, and consultation with parents, other caregivers, and early childhood professionals. The caregiver enjoys applying this knowledge in the daily program and in minute-to-minute decision making with children.
- Values solving problems constructively in the daily work and in interrelationships with children, parents, and coworkers.

Finally, it should be noted that caregiving is a dynamic, moment-to-moment activity. For the caregiver much information about what should be done and how much should be done is learned in the interaction with the child. Knowing infants and toddlers as unique individuals provides important clues about how best to care for them. When caregivers respond sensitively to infants' signals and communicative exchanges, they increase the infants' participation in social interaction as well as their ability to read the signals of others.

The following pages describe five major goals ranging from promoting habits of health to establishing positive and productive relationships with families. These visions or statements of general purpose are further defined in terms of more specific core areas of quality care. They are not intended to impose formal routines on centers or family-care homes but rather to support the unique value of flexible home and center environments and the diversity of individual providers. These goals and the related skills that caregivers need to think about in managing a well-run program and meeting the needs of infants and toddlers apply equally well to both centers and family care homes. The purpose of the goals is to serve as guideposts in setting up a safe environment, planning sound activities, solving day-to-day problems, and enhancing professional growth.

VISION VI

Safety, Health, and Nutrition

Safety

The caregiver provides a safe environment to prevent and reduce injuries.

One of the most fundamental services for young children is to ensure the children's safety and well-being. The skills, knowledge, and attentiveness that caregivers need to prevent injuries and handle accidents appropriately cover a broad range of concerns. For example, indoor and outdoor areas need to be free of dangerous conditions and hazardous materials, such as tools, chipped paint, uncushioned surfaces under climbing equipment, exposed electrical outlets, medicines, matches, or unguarded stairways. Caregivers should know basic first-aid procedures, including how to assist a child who is choking; and they should maintain adequate first-aid supplies, a current list of emergency service phone numbers, and safety equipment, such as fire extinguishers and smoke detectors. Finally, the caregiver should know how to respond immediately and sympathetically to a child's injury and how to teach children about safety. In a safe environment children will learn gradually to protect themselves and to look out for others.

Young infants, because of their vulnerability and relative helplessness, must be attended to carefully to ensure their safety and security. The caregiver must pay close attention to a host of details—from making sure the crib rail is locked in its *up* position during a nap, for example, to keeping baby powder, ointments, and creams out of reach while diapering.

Mobile infants are changing each day. As their rapidly increasing motor skills lead them into new areas, adults must anticipate new hazards, being alert to the fact that they can move faster, climb higher, and reach things they could not reach only a few days before.

Toddlers are especially challenging. At the height of their exploratory curiosity, they are not yet fully aware of what activities are dangerous. While letting toddlers stretch boundaries and test their surroundings, adults must oversee that testing with a watchful eye and begin explaining in simple language the cause-effect relationships of safety precautions.

Health

The caregiver promotes good health and nutrition and provides an environment that contributes to the prevention of illness.

Good health involves sound medical and dental practices through which adults model and encourage good health habits with children. Caregivers should be able to recognize common signs of illness or distress and respond promptly. Acute or chronic illness should be referred for treatment as soon as possible so that children can develop and take full advantage of the program. Children need a clean environment that is properly lighted, ventilated, and heated or cooled. Indoor and outdoor areas should be free of materials or conditions that endanger children's health. Care of the child's physical needs communicates positive feelings about his or her value and enhances the child's developing identity and sense of self-worth. Parents and caregivers should exchange information about the children's physical health frequently.

Providing ***young and mobile infants*** with affectionate and competent physical care includes responding to their individual rhythms while working toward regularity in feeding, sleeping, and toileting. It also includes sanitary procedures for diapering and cleaning toys that infants put in their mouths.

Toddlers imitate and learn from the activities of those around them. Good health habits can be established through modeling and encouraging toothbrushing, hand washing, eating of nutritious foods, and so on.

Nutrition

The caregiver provides a nutritious, well-balanced diet which corresponds to each infant's dietary needs and emerging eating skills, thereby fostering a positive attitude toward wholesome food and eating routines.

Good nutrition is essential to the physical, emotional, and social well-being of the developing child. Since mealtimes are an integral part of daily activities, they encompass more than just the provision of a nutritious diet. Eating should be an enjoyable experience. Mealtimes need to be relaxed and unhurried, with food served simply and attractively. Feeding activities provide not only a time for social interaction between the infant and caregiver and infant with other children but also an opportunity for learning as children experience new tastes and textures and practice their developing motor skills. Caregivers' responsibilities also include ongoing communication with parents regarding prescribed formulas, dietary requirements and restrictions, and quantities of food provided and consumed. A weekly menu should be posted to inform parents of the meals and snacks being served.

Young infants need special attention during feeding times to provide them with enough food, emotional nurturing, and cognitive stimulation for their healthy development. They thrive on familiar feeding routines with the same caregiver, when possible, and flexible schedules which allow for feedings when they are hungry. Young infants should always be held for feedings. Proper storage for mother's milk should be provided if needed; and regular milk, formula, and mother's milk should be kept refrigerated. Young infants may start to eat solid foods at about four or five months of age, beginning with smooth cereals and strained fruits and vegetables. New foods should be introduced gradually, one at a time.

Mobile infants can communicate when they want food and when they have had enough. They may be able to sit for feedings. They use their senses to explore food as they begin to feed themselves. In addition to mother's milk or formula, which still fulfills their basic nutritional needs, they can have strained fruits and vegetables and juices and also small pieces of soft foods, such as cooked carrots or sweet potatoes. Raisins, hot dogs, and other chewy foods should not be fed to mobile infants because they cannot chew well. Mobile infants may begin to drink from cups as well as bottles, and they enjoy practicing feeding themselves with a spoon while being spoon-fed. They may be very messy in their early attempts to feed themselves; but letting them handle their food helps them develop small-muscle coordination, sensory awareness, and growing feelings of autonomy.

Toddlers are ready for a wider range of solid foods as mother's milk and formula become less important sources of nutrition for them. They continue to eat cereal, fruits, and vegetables, supplementing those foods with an increasing variety of other foods. Through feeding themselves finger food and using bowls and spoons, they learn eye-hand coordination and independence. Foods which are harder to chew can be appropriate for toddlers when the foods are cut into small pieces. Popcorn, nuts, and other hard or brittle foods, which can cause choking, are not appropriate for toddlers.

VISION VII

Development of Each Child's Competence

Social and Emotional Development

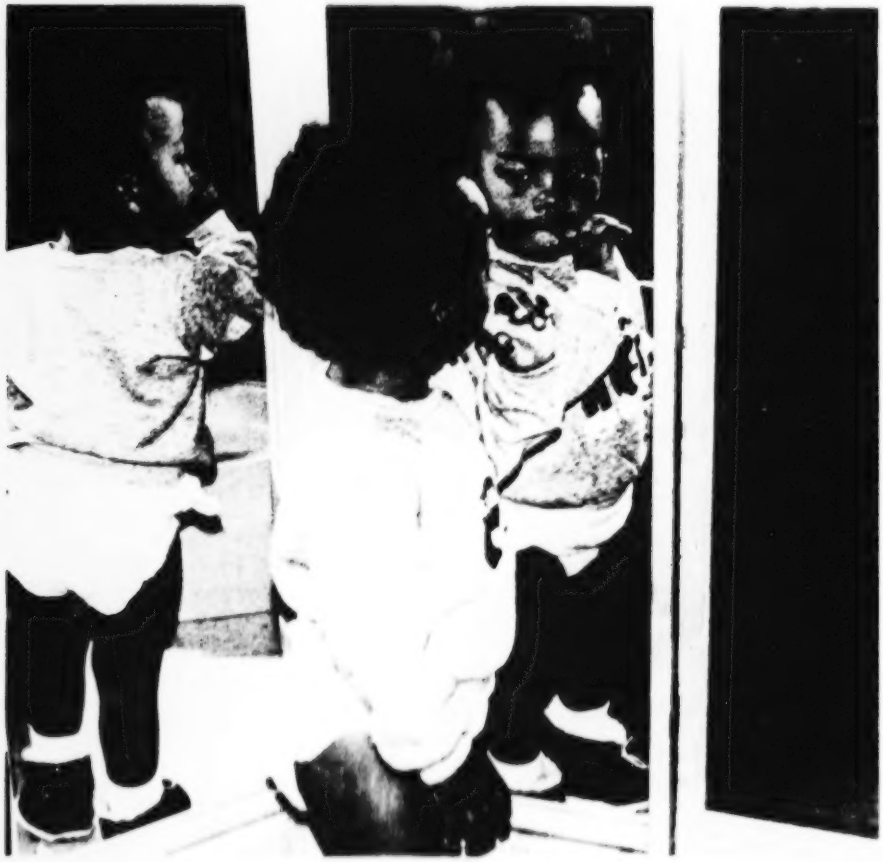
The Self

The caregiver provides physical and emotional security for each child and helps each child to know, accept, and take pride in himself or herself and to develop a sense of independence.

All children need a physically and emotionally secure environment that supports their developing self-knowledge, self-control, and self-esteem and at the same time encourages respect for the feelings and rights of others. Flexibility, responsiveness, and emphasis on individualized care for each infant and toddler are especially important in providing this security. Knowing oneself includes knowing about one's body, feelings, and abilities. It also means identifying oneself as a girl or boy and a member of a family and a larger cultural community. Accepting and taking pride in oneself comes from experiencing success and being accepted by others as unique. Self-esteem develops as children master new abilities, experience success as well as failure, and realize their effectiveness in handling increasingly challenging demands in their own ways in an atmosphere of loving attention.

Young infants, during the first few weeks and months of their lives, begin to build a sense of self-confidence and security in an environment in which they can trust that an adult will lovingly care for their needs. The adult is someone who feeds the child when the child is hungry, keeps the child warm and comfortable, soothes the child when the child is distressed, and provides interesting things to look at, taste, smell, feel, hear, and touch.

For ***mobile infants*** a loving caregiver provides a home base of warm physical comfort and a safe environment to explore and master. This emotional consistency is essential to developing self-confidence and supporting language, physical, cognitive, and social development.



Toddlers become aware of many things about themselves, including their separateness from others. A sense of self and growing feelings of independence develop at the same time that toddlers realize the importance of parents and other caregivers. The healthy toddler's inner world is filled with conflicting feelings and ideas: independence and dependence, confidence and doubt, fear and power, hostility and love, anger and tenderness, aggression and passivity. The wide range of toddlers' feelings and actions challenges the resourcefulness and knowledge of the adults who provide emotional security.

Social Skills

The caregiver helps each child feel accepted in the group, assists children in learning to communicate and get along with others, and encourages feelings of empathy and mutual respect among children and adults.

To develop social skills needed to work and play cooperatively and productively, children must feel secure themselves and value others.

While nurturing each child's own self-esteem, caregivers should promote and model interactions that assist children in learning to get along with others and encourage feelings of empathy and mutual respect.

Young infants enter the world with a capacity and a need for social contact. Infants need both protective and stimulating social interactions with a few familiar, caring adults who get to know the children as individuals; use frequent eye contact; play responsive social games; and talk to the children during feeding, bathing, and dressing. The adults' understanding response to the infants' signals increases the infants' participation in social interactions and their ability to read the signals of others.

Mobile infants are curious about others but need assistance and supervision in interacting with other children. They continue to need one or a few adults on a consistent basis as their most important social partner(s).

Toddlers' social awareness is much more complex than that of younger children. Toddlers can begin to understand that others have feelings, too—sometimes similar to and sometimes different from their own. They imitate many of the social behaviors of other children and adults: taking turns with a ball, sharing a game, putting toys away. As toddlers become increasingly interested in other children, they continue to rely on familiar adults to guide and support their interactions.

Guidance

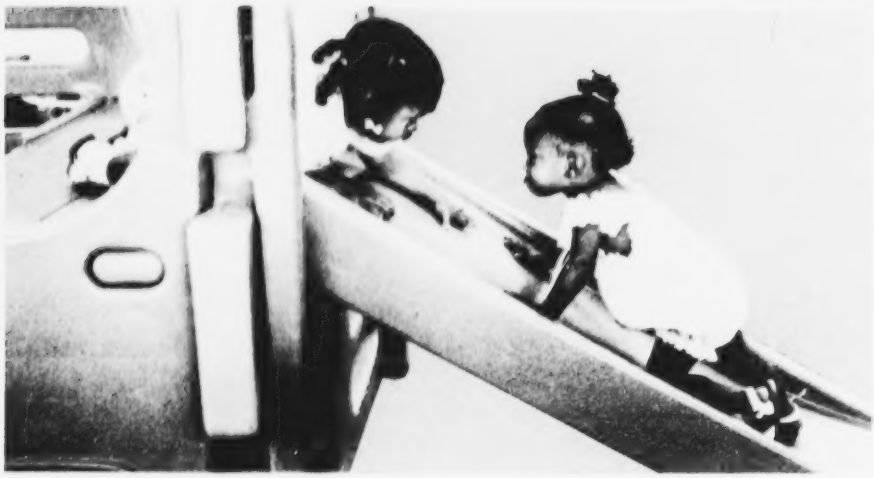
The caregiver provides a supportive environment in which children can begin to learn and practice appropriate and acceptable behaviors as individuals and as a group.

Knowing what behavior is appropriate or acceptable in a situation is an important skill. Children develop this understanding when consistent limits and realistic expectations of their behavior are clearly and positively defined. Understanding and following simple rules can help children develop self-control. Children feel more secure when they know what is expected of them and when adult expectations realistically take into account each child's development and needs. In nurturing this self-control, caregivers can use a variety of positive guidance methods: listening, reinforcing appropriate behavior, anticipating and defusing conflicts, or redirecting aggression. Negative methods such as spanking, shaming, or threatening can lead to physical and verbal aggression and inhibit the development of self-discipline.

Young infants begin to adapt their rhythms of eating and sleeping to the expectations of their social environment through the gentle guidance of sensitive caregivers who meet their needs. Learning basic trust in adults and the environment now makes the child much more open to accepting guidance from adults later on and lays the groundwork for developing self-discipline.

Mobile infants want to do everything, but they have little understanding about what is permissible and cannot remember rules. Adults can organize the environment in ways that clearly define limits and minimize conflicts. While respecting the child's experiments with saying no, caregivers who set appropriate limits can reinforce positive social interaction (e.g., hugging), discourage negative behaviors (e.g., biting), and model how to treat people and things gently.

Toddlers, who move through recurring phases of extreme dependence and independence, gain new skills and awareness. They require an understanding caregiver who remains calm and supportive during their struggle to become independent. Adults must be resourceful in recognizing and encouraging self-reliant behavior (e.g., letting toddlers solve their own problems, when possible, while at the same time setting clear limits).



Physical Development

The caregiver provides a variety of equipment, activities, and opportunities to promote the physical development of children.

Physical development, an essential part of the total growth process of children, includes using large and small muscles, coordinating movements, and using the senses. Large-motor development includes strengthening and coordinating the muscles and nervous system and controlling large motions by the use of the arms, legs, torso, or whole body. Small-motor development involves the ability to control and coordinate small, specialized motions by using the eyes, mouth, hands, and feet. Adults should provide materials, equipment, and opportunities for indoor and outdoor activities that encourage this development and recognize and respect the wide differences in individual rates of physical growth.

Young infants begin all learning through physical movement, taste, touch, smell, sight, and sound. By moving their arms, hands, legs, and other parts of their body and by touching and being touched, infants develop an awareness of their body and the ability to move and interact with the environment. By using their mouths to explore, hands to reach and grasp, and the entire body to roll over and sit up, they master the necessary skills needed for the development stages that follow. They need appropriate materials and experiences to encourage grasping, dropping, pulling, pushing, fingering, and mouthing.

Mobile infants delight in practicing and achieving new physical skills: crawling, standing, sitting down, cruising, and walking. They interact with their environment in a practical way, using all their senses to examine and manipulate objects, and begin to understand cause and effect, space, and distance. Caregivers can encourage active manipulation by providing a variety of objects (e.g., pails and shovels, shapes that fit into holes) and ample opportunities to practice creeping, crawling, cruising, walking, and climbing.

Toddlers continue to master physical skills at their own individual rate. Their learning and interaction with the environment continue to be active. Although they are gaining greater control and satisfaction through the use of their small muscles (e.g., by working with playdough or puzzles, painting, or drawing), they need opportunities to exercise their large muscles often each day through the use of equipment such as ride-on toys and boxes for climbing on or crawling through.

Cognitive Development

The caregiver provides activities and opportunities that encourage curiosity, exploration, and problem solving appropriate to the developmental levels and learning styles of children.

Exploring and trying to understand the world are natural and necessary for children's cognitive or intellectual development. As children learn and grow, their thinking capacities expand and become more flexible. Adults should support and guide this process by responding to children's interests with new learning opportunities and to their questions with information and enthusiasm. Cognitive growth also requires healthy development in other areas: physical growth and development of motor skills, a secure emotional base, and positive social interactions.

Young infants begin cognitive or intellectual learning through their interactions with playful caring adults in a secure environment. Some of their early learning includes becoming familiar with distance and space relationships, sounds, similarities and differences among things, and visual perspectives from various positions (front, back, under, and over). Such learning can be reinforced by describing to infants what they feel, hear, touch, and see.

Mobile infants actively learn through trying things out; using objects as tools; comparing; imitating; looking for lost objects; and naming familiar objects, places, and people. By giving the infants opportunities to explore space, objects, and people and by sharing children's pleasure in discovery, adults can help children become confident in their ability to learn and understand.

Toddlers enter into a new and expansive phase of mental activity. They are beginning to think in words and symbols, to remember, and to imagine. Their curiosity leads them to try out materials in many ways. Adults can encourage this natural interest by providing a variety of new, open-ended materials for experimentation. They can create a supportive social environment for learning by showing enthusiasm for the children's individual discoveries; encouraging them to name things and talk about their experiences and observations; asking questions that have more than one answer; and encouraging the children to compare and contrast objects, sensations, and events.

Language Development

The caregiver actively communicates with children and provides opportunities and support for children to understand, acquire, and use verbal and nonverbal means of communicating thoughts and feelings.

Communication between people can take many forms, including spoken words or sounds, gestures, eye and body movements, and touch. Children need to understand both verbal and nonverbal means of communicating thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Adults can help children develop such skills by encouraging communication and providing ample opportunity for children to listen, interact, and express themselves freely with other children and adults.

Young infants need adults who are attentive to their individual signals. Sensitive responsiveness to vocal messages encourages communication. Infants' early babblings and cooings are important practice for later verbal expression. Their speech development is facilitated by an encouraging partner who responds to their beginning communications, repeats their sounds, offers sounds for them to imitate, and explains events to the baby while they are taking place.

Mobile infants begin to jabber expressively, name familiar objects and people, and understand many words and phrases. Adults can build on this communication by showing active interest in children's expressions, interpreting their first attempts at words, repeating and expanding on what they say, talking to them clearly, and telling simple stories.

Toddlers daily increase their vocabularies and use of sentences. There is a wide range of normal language development during this time. Adults can communicate actively with all toddlers—modeling good speech, listening to them carefully, making use of and expanding on what they say, and helping them

with new words and phrases. Language can be used in a variety of pleasurable ways each day—through songs, stories, directions, comfort, conversations, information, and play.

Creativity

The caregiver provides opportunities that stimulate children to play with sound, rhythm, language, materials, space, and ideas in individual, creative ways.

All children are imaginative and have creative potential. They need opportunities to develop and express these capacities. Creative play serves many purposes for children in their cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development. Adults should support the development of children's creative impulses by respecting creative play and by providing a wide variety of activities and materials that encourage spontaneous expression and expand the imagination.

Young and mobile infants are creative in their unique ways of interacting with the world. Adults can support their creativity by respecting and enjoying the variety of ways in which very young children express themselves and by giving them long periods of uninterrupted time to explore.

Toddlers are interested in using materials to create their own products—sometimes to destroy and create again or to move on. For example, they become absorbed in dipping a brush in paint and watching their stroke of color on paper. They use their voices and bodies creatively by swaying, chanting, and singing. They enjoy making up their own words and rhythms as well as learning traditional songs and rhymes. Adults can provide raw materials and opportunities for toddlers' creativity and can show respect for what they do. Make-believe and pretend appear gradually, and adults can join in imaginative play while helping toddlers distinguish between what is real and what is not.

Learning Environment

The caregiver uses space, relationships, materials, and routines as resources for constructing an interesting, secure, and enjoyable environment that encourages play, exploration, and learning.

Children of all ages learn through their own experiences, trial and error, repetition, and imitation. Adults can guide and encourage children's learning by ensuring that the environment is emotionally appropriate; invites play, active exploration, and movement by children; and supports a broad array of experiences. A reliable framework of routines, together with a stimulating choice of activities and materials, facilitates children's learning. Thoughtful caregivers recognize that the learning environment includes both people and relationships between people and that attention to the way in which environments are set up and used is an important contribution to the quality of a learning experience.

Young infants begin to learn from their immediate surroundings and daily experiences. The sense of well-being and emotional security conveyed by a loving and skilled caregiver creates a readiness for other experiences. Before infants can creep and crawl, caregivers should provide a variety of sensory experiences and encourage movement and playfulness.

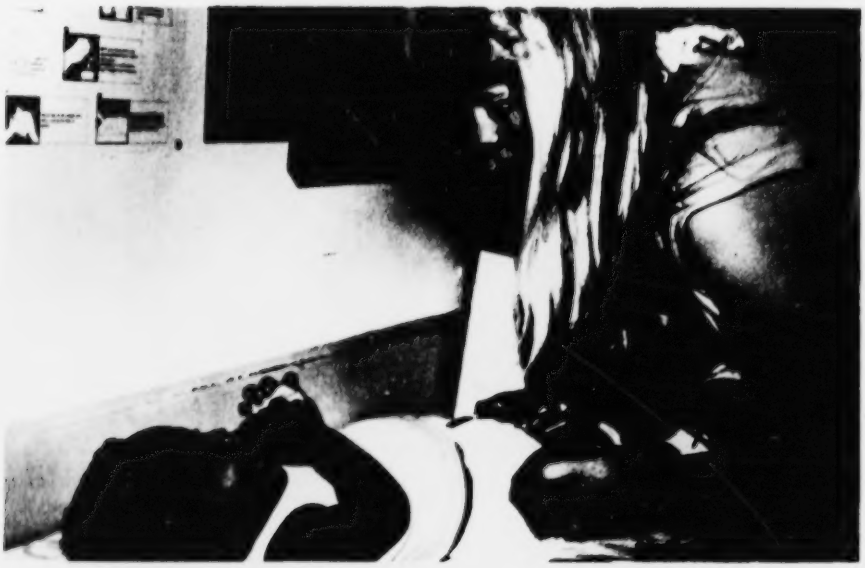
Mobile infants are active, independent, and curious. They are increasingly persistent and purposeful in doing things. They need many opportunities to practice new skills and explore the environment within safe boundaries. Adults can share children's delight in themselves, their skills, and discoveries and gradually add variety to the learning environment.

Toddlers are developing new language skills, physical control, and awareness of themselves and others each day. They enjoy participation in planned and group activities, but they are not yet ready to sit still or work in a group for very long. Adults can support the toddlers' learning in all areas by maintaining an environment that is dependable but flexible enough to provide opportunities for them to extend their skills, understanding, and judgment in individual ways.

Caregiving Routines

The caregiver uses feeding, napping, and toileting or diapering routines as opportunities to build a close personal relationship with each child while attending to the child's physical, emotional, and developmental needs.

When caregivers take time to exchange eye contact, smiles, and verbal or vocal communication with young children, caregiving routines are transformed into some of the day's most interesting and pleasurable learning experiences. Feeding, napping, and diapering times are valuable learning



opportunities for language, small-muscle, cognitive, and social development when children are given time to respond and participate. Young children who are fed in a relaxed, attentive way learn to enjoy their food and develop good eating habits. Having realistic expectations about children's messy eating styles can help caregivers feel comfortable about letting the children experiment and develop feeding skills. Warm and consistent napping procedures with the same caregiver whenever possible make it easier for children to fall asleep and offer the opportunity for intimate, personal contact. By moving slowly and talking in a calm way to infants and toddlers before and during diapering or toileting, caregivers can elicit cooperation and help the children develop wholesome attitudes toward their bodies and bodily functions.

Young infants learn basic trust in the world by having their physical needs attended to in a gentle and timely way. Nonmobile infants need consistency in feeding, diapering, and napping to be able to recognize and to anticipate routines, but scheduling should be flexible enough for individual needs as the children grow and change. Through responsive communication during caregiving routines, they learn the usefulness and pleasures of language.

Mobile infants explore through their senses and growing physical skills. Their competencies increase as they learn to feed themselves finger food, crawl to an eating area, or lift up a foot ready for a sock. During caregiving routines children enjoy making connections between their experiences and words that describe those experiences through spoken language or songs.

Toddlers vacillate between independence and dependence. They do, however, often appreciate the opportunity to do things for themselves. They are able to participate actively in their own feeding and enjoy getting out a diaper or a book before a nap. They may need extra time to practice skills involved in feeding or dressing themselves. Successful completion of these tasks leads to great satisfaction with themselves and the development of a healthy sense of self-esteem and competence.

VISION VIII

Establishment of Positive Child, Family, and Provider Relationships

The caregiver maintains an open, friendly, and cooperative relationship with each child's family, encourages the family's involvement in the program, and supports the child's relationship with the family.

Today's families take many different forms. Single mothers or fathers, both parents, or stepparents may share responsibility for their children with grandparents, uncles, aunts, sisters, or brothers. The caregiver and parents become partners who communicate openly and respectfully about a variety of concerns. Thus, the caregiver is able to discuss problem behavior with parents in a constructive, supportive manner; respect each family's cultural background, religious beliefs, and child-rearing practices; and develop strong, caring relationships with children while at the same time supporting family bonds. Caregivers also recognize that parenthood, too, is a developmental process and that they can support parents in that role.

Young infants are establishing patterns of sleeping, waking, eating, playing, and relating to others. They can be supported in developing some stability in those routines by the sensitive and consistent responses of adults. Parents and caregivers can respond more appropriately to the infant's signals when they share details with each other about the child's day: sleeping, eating, and diapering routines; activities; and moods.

Mobile infants may have difficulty separating from the parents, even when the caregiver is a familiar and trusted person. Caregivers and parents need to discuss ways of handling this problem and recognize that separation may be upsetting for both parent and child. Caregivers should recognize the potential for competition between themselves and parents and work to avoid it. Caregivers and parents also need to agree on reasonable and safe limits as children begin to explore and wander.

Toddlers develop their own special routines to feel more organized and secure. Parents and caregivers need to share a common understanding of the child's patterns and provide constant, dependable support for the toddler's growth toward self-definition.

VISION IX

Effective Program Management

The caregiver is a manager who uses available resources to ensure a quality program for infants and toddlers. The caregiver is a competent organizer, planner, record-keeper, and communicator and is a cooperative co-worker.

Running an effective program requires a systematic and sensitive approach. A systematic approach means that the caregiver can determine the needs of her or his operation, families, and children; can make plans based on those needs; and can keep accurate records of needs, plans, and practices. Such a systematic approach should be applied to keeping records of attendance, fees, health status, and home visits. It should include specific plans for meeting the needs of children and their families and coordinating communication among involved adults through written information, meetings with parents and resource persons, and frequent informal discussion.

A sensitive approach includes the emotional climate of the center or family care home as well as the details of the daily program. The quality of interaction between all adults and children directly affects the experience for each child. Adults must recognize that tensions in themselves and inconsistencies or conflicts between themselves and others will be communicated to the children. Adults must work to understand themselves and provide a consistent, supportive, and cooperative atmosphere for all participants in the program.

VISION X

Promotion of Professional Growth and Development

The caregiver makes decisions based on knowledge of early childhood theories and practices, promotes quality in child-care services, and takes advantage of opportunities to increase competence for personal and professional growth and the benefit of children and families.

Caregivers working with young children and their families need to make decisions based on knowledge of early childhood education and family life and demonstrate a commitment toward quality care for young children. The professional caregiver continues to set new goals and to take advantage of training or educational experiences that will help her or him to grow more competent. For example, the caregiver can continue to gain knowledge of physical, cognitive, language, emotional, and social development as a basis for planning program goals and keep informed about child-care practices, research, legislation, and other developments in early childhood education. Recognizing that the way in which adults relate to one another directly affects the quality of child care and sets examples for children, caregivers work to resolve issues and problems among themselves cooperatively and respectfully. They also work together to educate the community at large about the needs of young children for quality care services and act as advocates for the caregiving profession. The child-care provider should establish relationships with other child-care professionals and establish a network for information and support.

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